"Joy came to her father's side. She regarded Theodora with a dumb look. Theodora's smile quickly shifted to the girl her brother loved. She seemed to measure Joy, as Joy seemed to measure her."

kettle made gay the center table. The time-worn bureau had been turned into a buffet; on it stood two chafing-dishes, several pieces of fine china, and a huge, old-fashioned silver cake-basket; a water-color brush had splashed the dingy baize screen with an orange sun and a flight of swallows.

I. Tomlinson sat down again. "Mr. Meigs," he said, "your daughter is going to sing at Kirkhill's to-night, isn't she? I asked her last night to let me take your place at the piano. I'm I. Tomlinson, Junior—father makes the Tomlinson cravats, you know. I'm writing a musical comedy. Will you let me be your daughter's accompanist while you're laid up?"

A shadow fell on Mr. Meigs' face. "I wish I were stronger," he said in a troubled undertone. He looked earnestly at the blooming young man. "My daughter is not a regular cabaret singer, Mr. Tomlinson. She is studying fashion drawing in the School of Applied Design for Women here in New York. To keep the pot boiling until she graduates, she does odds and ends of art work, and, occasionally,—a week here and a week there—café singing. Last term, she won the first prize in the pen-and-ink fashion class. Her teachers predict a great success for her in the fashion design field."

"I call that fine," said I. Tomlinson. "She's plucky."

Mr. Meigs' eyes filled. "Excuse me," he apologized gently. "I wish I were stronger."

"That's all right," said I. Tomlinson. Unexpectedly, he got up and put an arm about Mr. Meigs' shoulder. "I call you two an O. K. pair," he said sincerely. "I'll consider it a mighty big honor if you'll let me play for Miss Meigs while you're laid up."

"I'm afraid I haven't quite recovered from my collapse," murmured Mr. Meigs. "My daughter's engagement at Kirkhill's is only for this week," he went on. "I shall be very glad to have you play for her during that time. She will be in from the art school at five. Will you wait, and go over her songs with her then?"

At five o'clock the girl with the copper-colored hair came home. She wore a season-old, brown corduroy Norfolk suit, a boyish round hat with a provocative red feather in it, and childish, square-toed, brown storm shoes. She carried a brown portfolio of drawings under one arm, and a brown paper bag under the other. At the sight of the visitor, her copper-colored eyes flew open.

I. Tomlinson took an impulsive step toward her. "How do you do?" he said.

"How do you do?" replied the girl, straight as an arrow in the doorway.

"Come in, Joy dear, and close the door," said Mr. Meigs.

Joy came in slowly.

"This is Mr. Tomlinson—who aided us last night," continued her father. "You remember him—don't you, daughter? He has kindly offered to play for you at Kirkhill's the rest of the week."

"She knows," intruded I. Tomlinson glibly. "I told her last night."

THE brown paper bag was neatly deposited on the center table. "Thank you," said the funny little mouth sweetly. "I telephoned Kirkhill's this morning that I couldn't sing without my father. The management has substituted my number."

I. Tomlinson flushed. He reached instantly for his hat and stick.

"Don't go," said Mr. Meigs kindly to I. Tomlinson. "Joy,"—he looked with a tinge of reproof at his daughter—"this young man has given a tiresome invalid a very happy hour. We've been talking about garden stuff. Dear, I should like very much to ask Mr. Tomlinson to take dinner with us." Mr. Meigs spoke with simplicity.

"May I?" asked I. Tomlinson delightedly, laying down his hat and stick.

The brown portfolio of drawings joined the paper bag on the center table. "If dad says so—" conceded Joy.

"Thanks!" I. Tomlinson beamed upon her.

Mr. Meigs looked at the brown paper bag. "What's in the cupboard, Mother Hubbard?" he questioned.

"Mushrooms," said Joy. She began to open the bag.

"Mother Hubbard has a knack for cookery," Mr. Meigs said.

I. Tomlinson regarded with interest divers parcels coming out of the bag. "It's like a Christmas stocking," he commented. "What are they?"

"Butter, rolls, sugar, coffee, and mushrooms," tabulated Joy. "Mostly five cents' worth—we haven't any pantry." She carried the bundles to the bureau-buffet; then took off her round hat and Norfolk jacket.

In her short skirt and white blouse, she looked like a pretty boy. Whistling, she got a blue-and-white checked housekeeper's apron from a bureau drawer. From another drawer she took a snowy square of damask and three small hemstitched napkins. She whisked the covers from the chafing-dishes. Movement brought color to her cheeks.

"May I help?" asked I. Tomlinson.

She nodded. "Set the table, and pick the salad from the farms. Get me a head of lettuce, an onion, and some parsley. Do you like potato omelet?"

"I do!"

"Do you like buttered or stewed mushrooms?"

"I do!"

She laughed. "No; I mean *which*—buttered or stewed?"

I. Tomlinson looked at Mr. Meigs.

"Buttered," said Mr. Meigs helpfully.

"Thanks," said the heir to the Tomlinson cravats. "The devils of indecision are always after me."

He laid Joy's portfolio on the piano, spread the square of damask crookedly on the table, placed the three hemstitched napkins, and looked for approval at his hostess.

"The silver's in the left-hand drawer." Her head bobbed indicatingly. "Put the tomato plant on for a centerpiece."

I. Tomlinson hustled around, gathering crisp greens from the window gardens, laying out the heavy, old-fashioned silver forks, ivory-handled knives, and table- and tea-spoons, all monogramed "J. M." From the shabby arm-chair, Mr. Meigs talked of a pumpkin he had once raised—big enough for a Cinderella to ride in. Joy concentrated on her culinary art.

The dinner was served piping hot from the chafing-dishes—a luscious potato omelet, meaty buttered mushrooms, salad, and eggshell cups of black coffee.

I. Tomlinson, Junior, ate with huge relish. "May I come again?" he asked.

"If dad says so," said Joy demurely.

"Won't you say so?"

She shook her head.

He looked hurt.

"I say so, heartily," said Mr. Meigs.

"Thanks!" I. Tomlinson's hurt was still in evidence. "I wanted your opinion on a musical comedy I'm writing," he airily told Mr. Meigs. He stood up, flushing.

"I'm the musical critic of the family," said Joy. Her eyes lifted, radiated an unexpected shaft of amber light, and dropped.

I. Tomlinson laughed suddenly. "Then you'll let me read it to you?" he shot at her.

"No," she shot back. "To dad."

"All right. You'll be sorry if I star 'dad' in it. Maybe I'll drop in with it to-morrow. Do you go to art school every day?"

"Every other day. Between days, I tramp around getting orders for sketches. Have you seen any of my work?" She ran over to the piano and opened the brown portfolio. The sketches were appallingly good.

"My, you're clever!" admired I. Tomlinson. "Can you do everything?"

She nodded boastfully.

He picked up his hat and stick, and held out his hand to her, and then to Mr. Meigs. "I'll see you again soon," he said.

Out in the frosty night, I. Tomlinson took half a dozen snow-covered blocks